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ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 4NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
18 APRIL 1980

Liddy: Murder was Rx for our pain in papers

By THOMAS RAFTERY
and DONALD SINGLETON

Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy went on two network television shows yesterday morning and told the world he thought columnist Jack Anderson was such "a pain in the butt" to the Nixon White House that assassinating the newsman would have been "justifiable homicide."

Liddy not only told the world—he told Anderson himself, as the two men met face-to-face, for the first time, on the WABC-TV "Good Morning America" show.

According to Liddy, whose sanity was questioned on the second TV show by fellow Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt, discussions were held in the White House about Anderson's columns in the early 1970s.

The columns, Liddy said, "were seriously damaging American foreign policy." And he claimed that some of the Anderson's reporting had compromised an intelligence agent, causing the agent to be unmasked, tortured and killed.

A White House meeting

Liddy said he had made his recommendation of Anderson's assassination during a White House meeting at which Hunt had first suggested drugging Anderson with the hallucinogen LSD, so that Anderson would behave in a bizarre fashion and, as a result, would be discredited as a journalist.

Liddy said it was at that point that he interjected: "What are we fooling around with all this talk about LSD for? What you ought to do is just eliminate him."

Anderson said that neither Liddy nor anyone else could name a CIA agent who was tortured or killed as a result of his columns.

"It never happened," Anderson said. "You were prepared to kill me because of a wild rumor. Did you ever try to check it out?"

"I didn't say CIA agent," was Liddy's response. "I didn't limit it to that."

Before the show had started, Anderson, appearing agitated, asked executive producer George Merlis if he would have to shake Liddy's hand. "I'd be tempted to punch him in the nose," Anderson said.

But, at the moment of truth under the studio lights, the men shook hands and came out talking.

Liddy casually referred to himself and his intended victim as former combatants,

not unlike World War II fighter pilots meeting after the war to discuss old times.

Things were a bit different at the WNBC-TV "Today" show. Hunt, a White House insider who was a lookout during the Watergate break-in, refused to appear until Liddy had left the set.

Hunt said he never discussed with Liddy a need to kill Anderson. He said they did consider how to discredit the columnist with LSD, but dropped the matter when a retired CIA doctor said attempts along those lines overseas had been unsuccessful.



G. Gordon Liddy (right) meets columnist Jack Anderson (left) face-to-face on television show.

Dan Godfrey/Daily News